RAILROAD COMMISSION, IRELAND.

RETURN to an ORDER of the Honourable The House of Commons, dated 30 July 1838;—*for*,

COPY of TREASURY MINUTE, dated 3 November 1836, respecting the RAILROAD COMMISSION for *Ireland*.

COPY of TREASURY MINUTE, dated 3 November 1836.

THE Viscount Melbourne and the Chancellor of the Exchequer call the attention of the Board to a Commission which has been issued in pursuance of an Address presented to his Majesty by the House of Lords, on the 1st of August 1836.

By that Address his Majesty was humbly requested "to appoint persons of competent authority to consider and to report upon the principal lines of communication in Ireland, with reference to the comparative advantages and facilities they afford for the construction of railways; and that, with a view to ascertain the best lines between any of the principal places in Ireland which it may be desirable to connect by railways, and for which works joint-stock companies may be willing hereafter to apply to Parliament, his Majesty will be graciously pleased to direct such assistance to be afforded by the Board of Public Works towards a general survey of such lines as to his Majesty may seem fit."

My Lords will watch with the greatest interest the progress of the inquiry thus instituted; they feel it, however, to be the duty of Government to guard against any inference that it is their intention to interfere with private enterprize, in its legitimate application to purposes either of local or general improvement; they also feel it necessary that it should be distinctly understood that, by obtaining this information, no intention or pledge is either expressed or implied that works of this description should be undertaken at the public expense.

The main benefits to be obtained, appear to my Lords to be the impartial and authoritative information which may thus be laid before Parliament, and which will aid the Legislature in deciding between rival and conflicting interests, the tendency which it will have of preventing ruinous competitions, and the losses and expenses of litigations before Committees, and the facilities which may be afforded to capitalists and to companies to judge of the most advantageous mode in which investments in railroads can be made.

With this view, it appears to my Lords that it would be necessary first to ascertain the cities, towns, or harbours between which railroad communications are most likely to be profitable to the undertakers and useful to the public, in reference to the progress and development of agriculture, commerce, and manufactures; and more especially to the cheap, rapid, and certain intercourse between Great Britain and Ireland. This inquiry would necessarily embrace the consideration of such great trunk lines as are most capable of extended application and usefulness, having a due reference to such lines as shall combine engineering facilities with a provision for the wants of the existing population, and the extension and promotion of commerce and agriculture.

My Lords are quite aware that it would not be practicable, without great delay and expense, to obtain such minute surveys and estimates as would ultimately be required for the actual execution of these works. All that can be obtained by the proposed survey is a correct general view, on which more precise and minute investigation can be hereafter provided by those who may practically undertake the execution of these important works.

It will be necessary, where the proposed lines may lead to cities, towns, ports, harbours, or navigable rivers, to ascertain, as far as possible, the extent of commerce, and the nature and amount of the produce of the several places and districts, and thus to form some estimate of the advantages of the undertakings, not excluding however the future increase which facilities of rapid intercourse may produce.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit

My Lords have full confidence, from the character of the gentlemen appointed to form the Commission, that their inquiries will be conducted in a satisfactory manner.

The important operations which have been carried on, and are still in progress, under the direction of the Board of Ordnance, will furnish the Commissioners much valuable information, and will greatly assist and facilitate their proceedings; and they have no doubt that the Master-General will authorize and permit Colonel Colby to give the aid of his eminent scientific and professional acquirements and great experience in any way that the Commissioners may request, which does not interfere with or retard the great and important duties with which he is entrusted.

Transmit copy of this Minute to Mr. Phillipps, for the information of Lord John Russell, and request that, if his Lordship agrees with the views of the Board, he will make the necessary communication to the Commissioners and to the Board of Ordnance.

RAILROAD COMMISSION, IRELAND.

TREASURY MINUTE, dated 3 November 1836, respecting the RAILROAD COMMISSION for *Ireland*.

(Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer.)

Ordered, by The House of Commons, *to be Printed,* 31 *July* 1838.

654.

Printed image digitised by the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit